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who upset the tea cups and the sake flasks. 000

A public parade and celebration was held in Itoman in 1951, 527 541
and a short digression to describe it may be worth while. The main attraction was a parade, which halted frequently so that participating groups could perform dances, acts, or skits. In these there were several themes: (1) dances by female groups of all ages from beginning school girls to old women in their seventies. Many women wore artificial turtles [535] on their hats, the younger children having paper outlines of turtles. The young girls were led by an older man who kept time either by playing [533] the samisen or by clapping his hands. The very young girls beat small tin cans with sticks. The dances of the older girls and women were of two kinds: one symbolized the crane and the turtle (tsurukame). The [825] turtle is a symbol of longevity. The second is the pine-bamboo-plum [824] tree triad (shochikubai) symbolizing long life and beauty. (2) Female impersonators imitated both the traditional Japanese woman with her costume and hair arrangement, and the modern woman with a chignon [536] wearing a bright kimono, sun glasses, and smoking a cigarette. Their antics depended for their humor on the gracelessness of the men: they included mock flirtations and rejections, kicking of the heels, slapping with a fan, and other clowning. (3) Various balancing acts with long poles done by boys and young men. (4) Skits of individuals dressed as savages from the south seas. (5) Humorous acts showing the people of the northern district who were portrayed as jolly country bumpkins. Their caps, with tassels, looked like a cocoanut shell. The long false hair and beards were made of palm fibre. They carried ludicrous looking saws and axes while dragging a log.

One feature of the Itoman celebration was the well-known rope 527 526
pulling contest (tsunahiki). The giant rope, made of rice straw, is at least 100 yards long, and about two feet in diameter. Each end has a loop. These loops, joined by a heavy piece of wood, are above the center line. The men of the town divide into two groups. The tug of war began about 5 in the afternoon and was soon over, but one has been known to last until one or two o'clock in the morning. It is found in all villages, but there is no set date for it. The tug of war is an old diversion in Okinawa.[5]

In former years, Minatogawa people participated in the Itoman 527
festival. In 1951, they held their own evening celebration. This is a time of great beauty, with the light of the full moon illuminating the Pacific, the coral coast, and the mountains. The evening entertainment consists of some acts, similar to vaudeville, and a longer play. Crowds came from the surrounding villages, bringing their own [628] mats and their own sake. Most of the officials of the township attended.

5 Goldschmidt, Neu-Japan, has reproduced an interesting painting showing a tug of war in Naha around the end of the 18th century. It shows an [114] audience of court officials, the Chinese ambassador, as well as the various participants. Facing p. 179.

[520] [202] [535] [536] Young girls with pots of hot tea circulated in the audience. The stage performance was a combination of local amateur talent and professionals from Naha. Normally the entertainment begins with a traditional Okinawan dance by a professional woman dancer, followed by a short skit. Conversations in Okinawan between an educated man and a stupid rustic are favorite subjects. Acts of this type are greatly enjoyed and cause laughter, mainly I was told because the jokes had sexual overtones. The shorter acts are followed by a play. (The theme of this play will be discussed in the following chapter).

6

Other Holidays of the Year

[824] Chrysanthemum day, the ninth day of the ninth month (October 9, 1951), is a very minor holiday. A chrysanthemum is put in sake, and the flask is placed on the god shelf. A leaf of the plant is put in the sake when it is drunk. People at this time wish one another good health. The festival is only spottily observed.

[262] [252] There is a minor public holiday, the rice cake festival (mochi no matsuri), said to be native to Okinawa, on the 8th day of the 12th lunar month (January 4, 1952). On the day before, women prepare red and white cylindrical rice cakes, about 4 inches long and one inch in diameter. These are wrapped in the leaf of the sannin plant or in the leaves of sugar cane. The glutinous rice cake is made by first soaking rice in water and then washing it in a hand mill. The rice is put in a cloth bag to allow excess water to drip out. The following morning the rice is boiled and shaped and wrapped in the leaves. The cake is doughy and insipid to taste. On the morning of the 8th, the cakes are placed on the god shelf and after prayers the cakes are removed. They are served during the day to guests. Sometimes children attach strings to these cakes and hang them about the room. The holiday is not observed by every family in the village, but it was recognised in all the villages studied.

[769] The festival of the winter solstice, the longest night of the year (tōji) is known, but Hinatogawa was the only place in which its observance was noted. It is a home festival with prayers and the familiar offering of assorted foods to the ancestors.

[177] Western Christmas is not observed in any of the villages. It would not be surprising if it should become a holiday, with gift giving, feasting, and drinking, but without the religious connotations. Since the occupation, Okinawans have become conscious of Christmas.[6]

[799] 6 I was told that in certain villages of the northern district, such as Kushi and Higashi near Ogimi that there is a Christmas festival, without the gift exchange, a survival of earlier missionary teaching. Time did not permit me to verify this, but there seems little doubt that a Christmas festival does exist in some Okinawan villages, judging by the frequency with which I heard of it in Hatsuda and Ginoza villages.

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1

Community Recreation

Were it not for the public holidays and festivals, the family celebrations and informal social gatherings, opportunities for recreation would be very limited. Seeing a Japanese motion picture usually involves going to another village. Young people, especially those studying English, go to American movies in Naha when they can afford it. Many went to see Hamlet when it played there.

A Naha troupe presents plays in the rural villages. These appearances are advertised by a sound truck travelling throughout the countryside. Plays are of two main types: the historical drama and those of domestic life and manners. The historical plays are usually based on the heroic age in Okinawa, and are so filled with episodes and sword play that it is difficult, even for an Okinawan, to follow the plot. All plays are given in Okinawan.

The plot of a play of manners is of more interest, since it is concerned with the conflicts of obligations, duties, and personal desires. One such play, The Chaste Woman and the Dutiful Son, concerns a married couple who have one son. The husband drank too much and went with another woman. The wife objected, the husband tells her he no longer wants her and desires a divorce. The divorce attained, he takes the other woman as a second wife and moves with her to Nago, where he lives. Twenty years after, the second wife becomes ill, and dies, and the husband finds it increasingly difficult to earn a livelihood. The first wife, in the meantime, anxious to bring up her child well, has sent him to school. At the age of 20 he has become a school teacher. The successful young man--becoming a teacher is a great success--marries. The young couple have a child and everyone is happy.

The father in Nago earns a precarious living selling firewood. One day he reads of the success of his son in a newspaper. (This provides the actor with an opportunity for exaggerated astonishment and much staggering around). More soberly, the father decides to visit the first wife and their son. Lack of pride and poverty permits him to do this.

The first wife gives him an angry reception. When he has forced his way into the house, there is a loud quarrel. The successful young school teacher returns home, sees the quarrel, and asks his mother the identity of the man. The mother replies that she does not know him. The son inquires the reason for such a violent quarrel between his mother and a stranger. The mother had previously told her son his father had died. She now says she lied, and in the ensuing revelations, the son weeps a little. The father implores his son to intervene in obtaining the forgiveness of his former wife. But she will not forgive--neither will she forget--and does not want the old man around at all. The son

536 reminds his mother that he is a school teacher, that if he does not permit his father to enter the house, he can no longer teach school. The mother yields; the son and his wife bring their child to the new found grandfather, and the play closes with the overjoyed grandfather fondling and holding the child in his arms.

In the play, the conflict is resolved by a balancing of obligation with pride. A real father would have been so ashamed that he would [829] never have returned, but then there would have been no play. Only a poor, lonely shameless and crafty fellow would have come back. But once he was back, the son had no alternative but to accept and honor him. The woman's power in the house and her devotion to her son are demonstrated, but she too must yield to the obligation of her son's filial piety, though she does this only after a determined and dignified resistance.

545 Plays on the rural circuit start about 9 and end about 11 in the evening. The entertainment generally consists of an opening traditional dance by a woman, followed by a comedy skit, and a longer play, such as 536 the one just described. Comedy skits usually depend on clumsiness or obtuseness as the sources of their humor. One skit, for example, involved a thief entering a house at night. Clumsy and unsure of his way, he stumbled over everything, made loud noises, and was constantly in fright to see if some fresh stumble had awakened the house. Finally he manages to hide under a table, near which the members of the family are seated discussing a problem. His discovery, due to further awkward motions and noises, the chase, and his final apprehension close the skit.

545 Rural audiences are critical. Some actors cause laughter because their Okinawan pronunciation is considered poor, and the laughter often carries over to the serious parts. Delays between the acts are met with impatience, and there is some prompting from the audience. The admission is Y20 for adults and Y10 for children. The audience sits on the ground. These plays do not attract a large crowd unless the offering is a well liked play.

526 Sports and athletic meets are favorite recreations both for participants and observers. The sports mentioned by travellers 50 or 60 years ago, such as horse racing, boat racing, tugs of war, archery, and boxing have given way to a more organized athletic activity, inspired by the Japanese example. Only the boat racing and the rope tug of war have survived in these villages. Minatogawa's boat race each year attracts villagers from miles around. All villages, at various times of the year, have a rope tug of war. The annual athletic meets, which will be discussed under education, were introduced into Okinawa about 50 or 60 years ago.

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4

Ancestor Worship

"Ancestor worship" has been used to describe the devotion to the spirit of the dead and the long continued remembrance of them by the living. While it is too deeply intrenched to be changed, the term is not satisfactory. It is really the worship of those who precede one in death, and these may be ascendants or descendants. The term, "ancestor worship," also conceals the fact that there is a partnership of the living and the dead, which, continued by the living generation in the production of children, will carry over in the future, so that family continuity from the remote past to the remote future is never broken. It is, in the phrase of John Hubbard, "a chain of worship,"[2] not merely the worship of the past and of the dead. But whether in the popular mind these two conceptions, worship of the dead and the family as a continuity, are closely and consciously related is impossible for me to say. The two ideas exist side by side on the level of feeling: to respect one's ancestors and to have children.

Another form of ancestor worship occurs in observances honoring the first ancestor or the founder of the village. Each village has a place of the guardian god (ujigami), located on the supposed site where the founder of the village first settled, which perpetuates the memory of the founder, who may, in some cases, also be the first ancestor of a family living in the village. (It has been suggested that the ujigami also might be related historically to the fire deity). Ceremonies at the place of the village guardian god have a public character and were often conducted by the priestesses.

Hanashiro. The place of the guardian god, a small building, is located on a plot of village owned land, off the main road at the edge of the settlement where the cultivated land begins. It is not well kept up. There is no attendant or caretaker. When necessary, it is reconstructed by volunteer village effort. Broken stone stairs lead up to the small tile roofed building. Inside, there are 5 stones, about 10 inches on the side and 4 inches thick. Some have thought these also represent the primitive hearth stones associated with worship of the fire god. One villager described it as a woman's deity place. Before the war, emigrants to the South Seas, South America, Manchuria, or Japan and their relatives prayed here for the good health and early return of those departing.

Now there is public worship at the place on several occasions during the year. On the 3rd day of the 3rd month, a woman's holiday, women and children go to the seashore around Minatogawa, and, on returning, pray at the place of the guardian god. On O-Bon, the village lion appears in front of this site. There is samisen playing and the whole village offers a prayer. (Not all villages have the lion costume.

2 Quoted in L. Cranmer-Byng, The vision of Asia, New York, 1933, 42.

778 One person in front fills in the head and forelegs, another in back
796 provides the rear and hindlegs. The lion, with its human mechanism,
536 is a common sight at festivals and parades. It is a symbol of health
825 and strength worthy of imitation). In the Festival of the Full Moon, during the autumnal equinox, the lion appears again and the whole village participates in prayers before the festivities begin.

778 On the 1st and 15th of each lunar month, the headman goes to the
796 place of the guardian god and makes an offering of tea, burns a charcoal
764 stick, and says a prayer. On the 9th day of the 9th lunar month, the
[825] village council and the elders assemble before the village burial palanquin (gan), offer prayer at the founder's site and then before the village office where the lion is standing.

Minatogawa. This village has three deity places and various explanations are given for this. Some believe that two of them represent
778 sites of co-founders, a first son, and his younger brother, the second
796 son. The third site is vaguely known as a village god place. It is a small outdoor place of worship on the main village road, with a step and a shelf for charcoal sticks. The founders' sites are located in the center of the settled area, but on different sides of the road. In the site of the second son, there are three stones, shaped like life savers but with a bottom for placing the charcoal sticks, three glasses for tea, and three bottles. The site of the supposed first son, less well kept, has a small altar, four stones, tea cups, and cans for the burning of incense.

778 On New Year and at O-Bon, the whole, or substantial portions, of
796 the village pray first at the supposed first son's site, then at the
[782] second son's. Prayers are offered also at the roadside deity place.
[358] Some of the younger villagers hope that as the older residents die off, the expenses of providing offerings and upkeep for all three can be eliminated and that simpler observances can take place at the roadside shrine. The situation now is complicated by the fact that many people regard themselves as descendants of one or the other co-founder.

778 Matsuda. In this village, the founder's site is reached by stairs
189 leading up a hillside. It is in the settled area near a dense growth
[093] of trees and shrubs. Close by there is a shed in which the lion skin is kept. In this village the founder's site seemed less important than another religious place, on the main road, in which women of lesser rank in the former priestess system participate in ceremonies. In this village there seems to be less participation by all the people of the village at the place of the guardian or founder deity, and, instead, representatives, like the headman, elders, and the former priestesses
[096] conduct the ceremonies at New Year, O-Bon, and at the equinoctial holidays.